

Engage for Inclusion: A Shared Wisdom Hub on Building Resilient, Accessible Cities

A Practical Toolkit: Building Inclusive & Resilient
Smart Cities – Webinar shared experiences

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 **G3ict**
The Global Initiative
for Inclusive ICTs
Advancing the Rights
to Digital Access for
Persons with Disabilities

 **UCLG**
United Cities
and Local Governments

 **Microsoft**

Overview

By 2050, 70% of the global population will inhabit cities. Traditional urban planning must prepare for the opportunities to manage the complex socioeconomic and environmental pressures of this rapid growth. To remain resilient, efficient, and inclusive, cities must transition into Smart Cities that leverage Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to optimize resources, reduce carbon emissions, and enhance the quality of life.

The digital transformation serves as a tool for designing and maintaining public spaces and facilitates communication between city administrators and their residents. A truly smart city must be able to recognize persons with disabilities and aging populations as key actors who actively interact with and shape the built and digital environment. Failing to prioritize universal design while creating smart solutions creates new barriers and widens the digital divide.

Within this framework, the first webinar, Engage for Inclusion, sponsored by Microsoft, was held in November 2025, with participation from civil society, country representatives, and global organizations. In the different sessions, participants explored the future and the role of Smart Cities in addressing socioeconomic, environmental, and technological challenges, leaving no one behind, and shared examples of effective inclusive implementation.

The webinar brought together more than 140 participants from 36 countries, representing 73 cities worldwide. The regional structure of the webinar into three separate sessions was important to enable meaningful dialogue among cities, address shared challenges, regional priorities, and context-specific opportunities more effectively. This executive summary captures the collective experiences and insights shared during the sessions in a collapsed toolkit, ensuring that all participants can benefit from the collaborative knowledge generated.

City digital transformation is about using technology strategically to improve quality of life, strengthen trust, expand access, and build more resilient and equitable cities.

If you want to learn more, please read the full report here: G3ict.org/Engage-for-Inclusion

Practical Toolkit: Building Inclusive & Resilient Smart Cities

Drawing on the practices shared by cities, we developed a roadmap for cities working towards their urban transformation and smart initiatives.

Stage 1: Problem Diagnosis

Identify critical friction points in your city, e.g., healthcare access, transit mobility, or access to digital public services.

Stage 2: Strategy & Legal Alignment

Ensure the initiative is built on a foundation of human rights and international standards, such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) or the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG).

Stage 3: Public-Private-Civil Society Partnerships

Leverage the private sector for technical assistance and infrastructure, while placing persons with disabilities at the center of the conversation.

Stage 4: Data-Driven Implementation

Draw data from open mapping and participatory data to guide decisions, optimize resources, and anticipate needs. Develop a framework to ensure timelines are followed and resources are well localized. Train participants and secure accessibility in every stage of the initiative.


Stage 5: Monitor and Feedback Mechanisms Implementation

Continuous improvement ensures technology does not widen the digital divide. Use automatic evaluation tools to audit websites and digital services and apply feedback loops.

General recommendations:

- Establish the three A's: Accessibility, Affordability, and Availability
- Ensure the physical environment supports digital tools
- Promote open data standards across departments, associations, and cities to break the silos
- Strengthen data privacy and cybersecurity mechanisms
- Connect with organizations that have already worked in your city or with groups in other parts of the world who have applied a similar approach or face the same challenge

Toolkit applied to real best practices: Webinar city participants by thematic area

 Thematic Area: Digital access and secure authentication Digital access and secure authentication ensure that smart city technologies are inclusive, safe, and usable for everyone, allowing everyone to fully participate in urban life and benefit from digital public services.					
City	Stage 1: Problem Diagnosis	Stage 2: Strategy	Stage 3: Partnerships	Stage 4: Implementation	Stage 5: Monitoring
Singapore, Singapore	Fragmented and inefficient digital access systems that force users to manage multiple passwords and expose online transactions to avoidable security risks	Adherence to the CRPD and national accessibility laws and authorities, such as the Infocomm Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA)	Singapore Government and the private sector	Deployment of Singpass as a key form of authentication for government portals, private corporations, and major banks	Ongoing collaborative user-testing with persons with disabilities (PWDs) to proactively identify and fix issues



Thematic Area: Digital access and secure authentication

Addressing data gaps on persons with disabilities is essential for designing better public policies and planning, to support evidence-based decision making and monitor access to public services and spaces.

City	Stage 1: Problem Diagnosis	Stage 2: Strategy	Stage 3: Partnerships	Stage 4: Implementation	Stage 5: Monitoring
Makassar, Indonesia	A gap in the official data of lives of individuals with disabilities in the city	Adherence to the CRPD and national frameworks, specifically Law Number 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities	Kota Kita, UNESCO, Makassar city government, and Persatuan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia Kota (PerDIK)	Deployment of participatory digital data collection, along with geotagging, to document the lives of individuals with disabilities in the city	Capacity building sessions for young PWDs to utilize digital and AI tools for advocacy, independence, and participation, bridging the digital divide
Freetown, Sierra Leone	PWDs living in informal settlements face barriers to mobility and access to public infrastructure, services, and economic opportunities	Adherence to the CRPD and national legal frameworks, specifically the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2011	Humanitarian OpenStreetMap Team (HOT), Freetown City Council, National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)	Execution of a six-step mapping toolchain that includes aerial imagery, AI-assisted mapping, and field data collection	Continuous methodology refinement and facilitating the active participation of PWDs in the mapping and analysis process



Thematic Area: Access to public services for all

Accessible public services for Deaf communities ensure equal communication, independence, safety, and participation, helping guarantee full exercise of rights and engagement with society.

City	Stage 1: Problem Diagnosis	Stage 2: Strategy	Stage 3: Partnerships	Stage 4: Implementation	Stage 5: Monitoring
Mexico City, Mexico	Barriers in public services for approximately 140,000 residents with hearing disabilities	Adherence to the CRPD and national legal frameworks, specifically the General Law for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities	Mexico City, The Agency for Digital Public Innovation (ADIP) and civil society	Strengthening autonomy in direct communication, providing professional sign language interpreters for government procedures	Continued recruitment and training of interpreters, alongside regular consultations with the deaf community
São Paulo, Brazil	Barriers in public services for over 719,000 residents who live with a disability	Adherence to the CRPD and national legal frameworks, specifically the Brazilian Law on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (Law no. 13,146/2015)	São Paulo City, Ayuntamiento de São Paulo and civil society	Installation of the Sign Language Interpretation Center (CIL) across 900 public service points, including hospitals, health units, commissaries, etc.	Ongoing training for public servants or private agents on the use of the CIL platform and app



Thematic Area: Access to public services for deaf communities

Accessible public services for Deaf communities ensure equal communication, independence, safety, and participation, helping guarantee full exercise of rights and engagement with society.

City	Stage 1: Problem Diagnosis	Stage 2: Strategy	Stage 3: Partnerships	Stage 4: Implementation	Stage 5: Monitoring
New York, USA	High rates of career failure and unemployment for people with disabilities in New York	Adherence to the CRPD and national legal frameworks, specifically the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	New York City, Office of Talent and Workforce Development and Microsoft	Creation of specialized training programs, expansion of workforce career centers, and provision of paid internships	Ongoing assessment of city workplaces and job structures to be more accessible and inclusive



Thematic Area: Democratic participation and access to clear information

Democratic participation is essential for ensuring that persons with disabilities can influence decisions that affect their lives. Strengthening governance, equality, and effective policies.

City	Stage 1: Problem Diagnosis	Stage 2: Strategy	Stage 3: Partnerships	Stage 4: Implementation	Stage 5: Monitoring
Barcelona, Spain	Equal participation in democratic spaces for liberation and participation to engage in public life for PWDs remains a significant challenge	Adherence to the CRPD and national legal frameworks, specifically the General Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and their Social Inclusion in Spain (Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013)	Institute for People with Disabilities (Idem), Barcelona City Council, European Union	Development of an AI tool for plain language simplification and a protocol for an inclusive, accessible, and conscious participatory process	Gathered insights from interviews and focus groups, both with PWDs and accessibility professionals

A detailed version of this analysis can be accessed in the full report published on the G3ict website: [G3ict.org/Engage-for-Inclusion](https://www.g3ict.org/Engage-for-Inclusion)